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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [TU](#) [EUN](#) [USEU](#) [BRUSSELS](#)

SUBJECT: EUROPEAN ELECTIONS AND U.S.-EU RELATIONS

REF: A. A) BRUSSELS 1090

[B. B\) BRUSSELS 1094](#)

[C. C\) BRUSSELS 1736](#)

[D. D\) LISBON 481](#)

[E. E\) MUNICH 159](#)

[F. F\) BRUSSELS 2061](#)

Classified By: USEU POLOFF TODD HUIZINGA, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

[1. \(C\) SUMMARY:](#) Although most voters in the June 10-13 European elections will focus mainly on bread-and-butter themes such as employment, health care and the like, transatlantic issues will also attract attention. Brussels observers expect Iraq to feature more prominently in EU member states whose governments supported U.S. military intervention. Other war-on-terrorism issues, such as Passenger Name Record (PNR) and Guantanamo, are also expected to resonate with some voters. Some candidates have already indicated they will also address a more fundamental question: is Europe America's equal partner or a follower? Another issue of key interest to the U.S. -- Turkish EU accession -- will play a major role in campaigns in some member states, such as Germany and France. With tensions on Iraq and perceptions of U.S. unilateralism running high throughout Europe, U.S. Embassies in member states will face a constant challenge in getting the public to look at positive achievements in transatlantic relations in addition to the obvious U.S.-EU differences. END SUMMARY.

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Series Of Pre-Election Reports  
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[12. \(U\)](#) This is the fourth in a series of reports on the June 10-13 European elections. Ref A provides general background on the European Parliament (EP) and the European elections; ref B is a broad analysis of expected campaign issues and election outcomes; and ref C analyzes the possible impact on the EP of newcomers from the 10 new EU member states. Subsequent telegrams will examine the reelection prospects of key parliamentarians (MEPs), and possible post-election realignment of EP party groups.

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Iraq: Problem for Some U.S. Supporters  
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[13. \(C\)](#) Local Brussels commentators expect Iraq to loom large in the political campaigning for the European Parliament. Center for European Policy Studies scholar Ben Crum told us that campaign debate about Iraq would be most important in the EU member states whose governments supported the U.S. military intervention despite opposition among voters (see also ref D). Latvian EP observer Boriss Cilevics of the Party of European Socialists (PES) agreed, opining that Iraq would cause difficulties for pro-U.S. candidates in some of the new member states whose governments supported the U.S., mentioning specifically the Baltic states and Poland. EP observer Toomas Ilves (PES, Estonia) echoed those sentiments, claiming somewhat bitterly that he had "bought all the arguments" on Iraq only to find now that the U.S. had "run roughshod" over him during the past year.

[14. \(C\)](#) Our interlocutors tell us that in Germany, Iraq may spell trouble for the Christian Democratic opposition (CDU/CSU) that supported the U.S. effort. Klaus Welle, EP Director-General of Internal EU Policies and an active CDU official, said the CDU would try to avoid the Iraq issue. As Welle explained, talking about Iraq "can only get us into trouble." German Chancellor Schroeder's Social Democratic Party (SPD) apparently agrees: an SPD poster for the EP campaign carries a slogan giving the SPD credit for helping make Europe a "Power for Peace." An SPD campaign website, [www.europakampa.de](http://www.europakampa.de), names "strengthening Europe as a power for peace" as the first of eight reasons to vote SPD, adding, "if the CDU had had its way, there would be German soldiers in Iraq today." MEP and EP Vice President Ingo Friedrich, of the Christian Social Union (CSU), the CDU's Bavarian sister party, told us that transatlantic relations come up "first thing" at almost all of the events he attends with voters. His voters' interest, he implied, has been magnified several times over by the German-American discord over Iraq.

15. (C) Despite the above, it bears repeating that much will vary depending on the candidate and the country. EP observer Magda Kosa Kovacs (PES, Hungary) opined, for example, that Iraq would not be a huge campaign issue in Hungary because all major parties had agreed on military intervention. Similarly, and not surprisingly, UK Conservative MEP Geoffrey Van Orden told us the Tories would not criticize UK involvement in Iraq, but rather highlight PM Tony Blair's lack of openness and trustworthiness in managing UK Iraq policy. Swedish MEP Cecilia Malmstrom of the European Liberal Democrats affirmed that Iraq would be a campaign issue in the EU, but said that MEPs whose governments had been against the war would have difficulty leveraging Iraq for vote gains -- especially in France and Germany, she said, MEPs of the governing parties were likely to lose votes in the European elections for domestic reasons.

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Europe as Equal of U.S.  
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16. (C) It has become a catchphrase among EU elites in Brussels -- on both sides of the political spectrum -- that the transatlantic relationship, in order to thrive, must be a partnership between equals. Some candidates plan to make that idea a major component of their foreign-policy stance during their campaign. German Socialist MEP Helmut Kuhne (SPD) told us that a central issue of his campaign will be a "question to Europe": does the EU have the political will to be an equal partner of the U.S. rather than a follower? On May 7, as part of the kickoff to their campaigns, Dutch Greens MEP Joost Lagendijk and his compatriot Jan Marinus Wiersma (PES) presented their book, "After Mars Comes Venus: A European Answer to Bush." This book deals with the same question that Kuhne asks of Europe, urging the EU to realize its potential to become a "civil superpower." As Lagendijk told us, their objective is not to compete with the U.S., but to make the EU its equal partner and "critical counterpart." Despite assurances to the contrary, the "equal partner" slogan often implies the need for Europe to counteract an allegedly unilateral and arrogant U.S.

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War on Terrorism/U.S. Unilateralism  
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17. (C) Some of our interlocutors, such as Swedish MEP Malmstrom, tell us that some narrower U.S.-EU issues will also be part of EP campaigns. Two examples our interlocutors mention are the PNR agreement (International Agreement on Transfers of EU Passenger Name Records to the U.S. -- see ref F) and Guantanamo. In both areas, many MEPs have been in vocal opposition to U.S. policy on human rights grounds -- the right to personal data protection (PNR) and the right to a fair trial (Guantanamo). Voters who notice will likely place their views within the larger context -- the war in Iraq, the fight against terrorism and their perception of U.S. unilateralism. Brussels contacts tell us the Guantanamo issue will resonate much more strongly since the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal.

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Turkish EU Accession: An Issue with Momentum  
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18. (C) The issue of Turkish EU accession could be particularly prominent in Germany (where, for example, the Bavarian CSU has made opposition to Turkish EU membership its central campaign theme; see ref E). But it is expected to play a role in other countries as well -- including in France, Austria and Italy where we are told center-right and conservative parties also intend to campaign against Turkish membership. Both Klaus Welle of the CDU and PES MEP Erika Mann (SPD) told us the question of Turkish EU membership comes up at virtually every grassroots meeting with voters that they attend. Welle said German voters are worried about the implications of Turkish EU membership not only for the cohesiveness of the EU, but mainly for the identity of Europe as a historically Christian culture. Although interest in the Turkish issue will certainly be mixed and, again, vary from country to country and candidate to candidate, its possible association in voters' minds with unease about immigration, EU enlargement, a clash of cultures with Muslims, and the Cyprus problem provides the Turkey issue with noticeable staying power and high emotional content.

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COMMENT: TRANSATLANTIC FOCUS LARGELY NEGATIVE  
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19. (C) According to most of our interlocutors and judging from party manifestos, polls and press, the deciding issues for most voters will be their domestic government's performance on jobs, health care and other bread-and-butter issues. With the focus on what affects voters' everyday lives, even the major "European" issues of the season, such as the EU constitution or the future of the Stability and

Growth Pact, are not expected to be central in this European elections campaign. Despite the domestic focus, the question of relations with the U.S. will be the single most important foreign-policy issue for most Europeans. With U.S.-EU differences over Iraq, and a growing emphasis on the EU as "an equal partner," and thus implicitly a counterweight of the United States, European voters may focus more on U.S.-EU tensions than on positive examples of transatlantic cooperation. Finally, the Abu Ghraib scandal will increase attention to the U.S. in a manner that is certain to exacerbate ill will. In this campaign environment until the elections at the end of June, U.S. Embassies in member states will face a constant challenge in getting the public to look at positive elements in transatlantic relations in addition to the obvious U.S.-EU differences. END COMMENT.

10. (C) See USEU website on classified State Intranet at <http://useu.brussels.state.gov>

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